Volume 21, No. 26 • October 31, 2014

Nation

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editorial

Nothing to fear but fear itself

by Lyle Stewart

The attacks on Canadian soldiers in St-Jean-sur-Richelieu and Ottawa couldn't have come at a better time for the Conservative government of Stephen Harper. As I write in the wake of the two shocking incidents, conspiracy theorists are already spinning world-wide webs of intrigue.

And who can blame them?

Just as they were preparing to unwrap new, invasive "anti-terrorism" legislation, along came two incidents that appear gift-wrapped for the Harper Conservatives. In each, a soldier died needlessly, tragically, at the hands of clearly mentally disturbed people who had latched on to a hateful ideology as a way to explain away the failures in their personal lives.

Now Harper is using these incidents to push legislation that will fundamentally change Canada, and, not coincidentally, help secure his hold on power.

Yet to be unveiled, early reports of the legislation suggest that the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) wants the power to take advantage of the so-called "Five Eyes" spy network to which Canada, the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia and New Zealand all belong. The service wants more power to track Canadians they believe have been radicalized, and to take more advantage of anonymous sources.

However, powers already exist for law enforcement to arrest and prosecute Canadians who try to leave the country to fight for a terrorist organization. That raises the question of why Martin Rouleau-Couture was not apprehended well before he carried out his attack in Quebec. In addition to those powers, the law establishes secret courts to compel material witnesses or accomplices to divulge information about prospective terror attacks.

But there is little question, as the prime minister made clear the night of the attack in Ottawa, that he intends to play on Canadians' fears to go even further. Harper wasted no time profiting from the events in a well-rehearsed speech to the nation that will no doubt play a prominent role in Conservative advertising during next year's election.

We have already seen illegal information gathering against groups that Harper perceives as his enemies – including injured Afghanistan veterans angry over service cuts by the Conservative government.

So there is little confidence that this government will only use these powers against legitimate would-be terrorists. Indeed, government ministers have already called environmental groups "terrorist" because of their opposition to oil-sands pipeline projects. It's not a stretch to believe the government is already spying on legal citizen's groups.

In the US, former Nation Security Agency analyst Edward Snowden leaked information demonstrating how intelligence agencies expanded into political and industrial espionage, then into using the laws of their Five Eyes allies to circumvent national laws to gather information on their own citizens.

What's next? New laws to allow security agencies access to information on computer servers, personal devices, bank accounts and anything else? There is nothing to suggest this government won't use this information against its political opponents to ensure it remains in power, and further degrade our democratic ability to shape our nation's direction.

Throughout it all, we will be treated to a steady diet by the Conservatives' right-wing media allies of hate and fear. George Orwell's novel 1984 will seem like a prequel to what's coming.

But we still have a chance to avoid this future. Until these attacks, the Conservatives appeared headed for certain defeat in next year's elections. Now, more than ever, Canadians need to remain strong in the face of the threats against them.

There is an alternative future, however. And I was inspired by the words of opposition leader Thomas Mulcair in his address to the nation on the night of the attack in Ottawa.

"We woke up this morning in a country blessed by love, diversity and peace. And tomorrow, we will do the same," the NDP leader observed. "These acts were driven by hatred, but also designed to drive us to hate. They will not."

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photo by:
Nadine Track

Things that go bump in the dark

by Sonny Orr

One of the best things about Halloween is getting scared silly. These days, scary is really scary, as many people can apply makeup with ease and look deader than usual. I suppose that many a zombie, flesh-eater, night-walker and wannabe dead person will be the big costume hit for this year. The appeal of being dead has its merits I suppose – no taxes, no alimony, no insurance policies to pay for, no real problems except for tons of air fresheners and perhaps some embalming fluid to maintain your youthful appearance.

Back in the day, just having the sun go down was scary enough. True stories of real monsters would keep most folks indoors for much of the year, except when everyone was out for Halloween or New Year's. There was safety in number on those occasions. No ghouls would dare show off their real looks against the amateurish lipstick blood and someone's Sunday suit for fear of actually winning a contest by mistake. That, fortunately, hasn't happened yet, to my knowledge.

But scary stories, when told against the howling winds of an upcoming winter, seem more real when you're out on the land, alone, save for a few family members and a crackling HF bush radio to keep everyone up on the news. Last year, the bush radio declared that there were lights in the night skies, visibly moving on their own, rather low and unusually quickly. The miles that separated the camps were reached within minutes by that strange light, which then sped off to parts unknown.

Of course, the repeated sightings of Bigfoot tend to make things a little scarier when you discover that the creature is real and in some abundance, given that man hasn't really ventured beyond aircraft range and most of the north is extremely isolated from the internet and from the world in general. Oh well, another new species waiting to be officially discovered and protected from the prying eyes of the modern sensational news addicts. I wonder if one were to be caught on someone's iPod then posted on Facebook, would that go viral? Only time will tell, which I hope will be soon. Just think of what we could learn from them.

But, scarier still, is what is passing for costumes. Breaking Bad costumes, complete with meth bags and even a toy doll sold at Toys "R" Us can be made available. Now that's scary. I'm hoping for a Rob Ford mask myself, but that could change if he loses his election bid for Toronto city councillor.

Topping it all off is that people seem to think that life is not important and either take someone's life or their own. This is not restricted to Halloween, but tends to make Halloween a more dangerous scenario if you're not careful. Now at the top of the ice cream sundae of horror, is the Senate scandal, which makes me feel right at home, as it seems like no one is safe from the searing scary scenes of scandals.

For me, the sweet kids decked out in Mickey Mouse outfits and little fairy princesses with their magic wands is the side of Halloween I enjoy the most, especially when they get scared witless when the skeleton jumps out of the closet and nabs their treats away!

Trick or treat folks!

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Gumshun's gun

Remarkable discovery testifies to a family history

by Alexander Reid

both photos: Aanischaaukamikw Cree Cultural Institute

Surprisingly well preserved, a J. Stevens double-barreled, break-action shotgun that was lost in the dense wilderness between Chapais and Waswanipi more than 50 years ago has made a roundabout journey to the grandson of the long-deceased hunter who originally owned the weapon.

Former CBC reporter Gaston Cooper, a proud Cree hunter who now works at the Cree Cultural Institute in Oujé-Bougoumou, has the rifle that once belonged to his grandfather Alec Cooper, who was born in 1902 and died in 1965, the year before Gaston was born.

Alec Cooper was a former chief of Waswanipi renowned for his generous disposition and his skills as a master tracker and hunter. He bought the shotgun from the Hudson Bay Company at the Old Waswanipi Post in the late 1930s. The gun disappeared one day in the late 1950s after Alec loaned it to Gaston's future uncle, the late Richard Bowen, for a duck-hunting expedition.

In a moment of carelessness, Bowen left the gun leaning against a tree during the hunt.

"My uncle had put it near a tree and walked away without even thinking about it," said Gaston. "Eventually, he goes back looking for it, and there's so many trees he doesn't know which tree he put it under.

"Sure, my grandfather must have been upset," said Gaston. "It's a gun and at that time guns were very valuable."

For half a century the gun remained propped up against the same tree protected by a pouch of white canvas, sewn and stitched by Gaston's grandmother. It was only discovered in 2010, and remarkably, identified on sight.

"Willie Wapachee, the tallyman who found the gun, remembered that my late grandfather had lost it," said Gaston. "He decided to return it, but my grandfather had passed away some 50-plus years ago, so he gave it to his son, my uncle, Walter Cooper. He had it for four years until he passed away two years ago."

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This past year Gaston got an unexpected call from his aunt Charlotte, who entrusted him with the shotgun.

"My aunt took it out of the closet, and it was still in its pouch. I opened it and right away I sensed the connection with my grandpa," said Gaston. "You could see the gun in its original state. It was preserved as if nothing had happened to it."

Despite never having met him, Gaston says he's felt a spiritual connection with his grandfather throughout his life. Once, worry-stricken upon hearing news that his infant son may have sustained brain-damage during a fall, Gaston, then 28, being stranded hours away from his son, had reluctantly fallen into a troubled sleep. An Elder appeared in his dream and assured him there was nothing to fear.

At that moment Gaston was awakened by his wife, Nancy, telephoning to say their son had regained consciousness. Years later, leafing through the pages of a book on the history of Waswanipi, Gaston was astonished to recognize a man with the same face as the Elder from his dream – the caption on the photograph read "Alec Cooper."

Gaston brought the gun to the Cree Cultural Institute in Oujé-Bougoumou where his colleagues marveled at its condition after decades of unforgiving winters in nothing but a thin sack. Evidence suggests that the gun may be even older than Gaston originally anticipated.

"Our initial research puts the date of manufacturing anywhere between 1916 and 1942," said museum registrar Sharon Vance. "There's a plate on the gun that has the name of the manufacturer and the company was only called by that name during that time period. The inscription on the gun is 'Springfield J. Stevens Company Chicopee Falls.'"

A quick Google search puts the market value for similar antique shotguns from the first half of the 20th century at several hundred dollars. For the time being, Gaston wants the loaned gun to remain on display at the Cree Cultural Institute as an historical artifact.

Baking wishes come true

Young heart patient meets the *Cake Boss*

by Jesse Staniforth

Mistissini's Laykeshia Blacksmith was only 10 days old the first time she underwent an operation to replace the aortic valve of her heart. A second operation followed when she was three months old, and a third three months after that.

Now 11, Laykeshia lives a normal life – for the most part. But aortic valve stenosis – a disease that prevents the aortic valve of the heart from growing with the rest of the body – is part of her daily reality.

Despite the health challenges, Laykeshia's mom, Queenie Blacksmith, says her daughter is like any other kid in Mistissini.

Except for a recent trip to Hoboken, New Jersey, that is. Thanks to the Make-A-Wish Foundation, which grants wishes to children who live with life-threatening conditions, Laykeshia visited the set and star of the popular TLC reality show *Cake Boss*, Buddy Valastro.

"It was absolutely fun," said Queenie of her daughter's trip. "She had an awesome time. When we first walked in, the *Cake Boss* assistants gave us a tour. We were in the bakery area, just talking, and all of a sudden – it was such a surprise for Laykeshia – Buddy walked in. Laykeshia was all smiling. She couldn't believe it. She said, 'I feel like this is just a dream.'"

The family got the news Laykeshia would be getting her wish granted by Make-A-Wish in 2011.

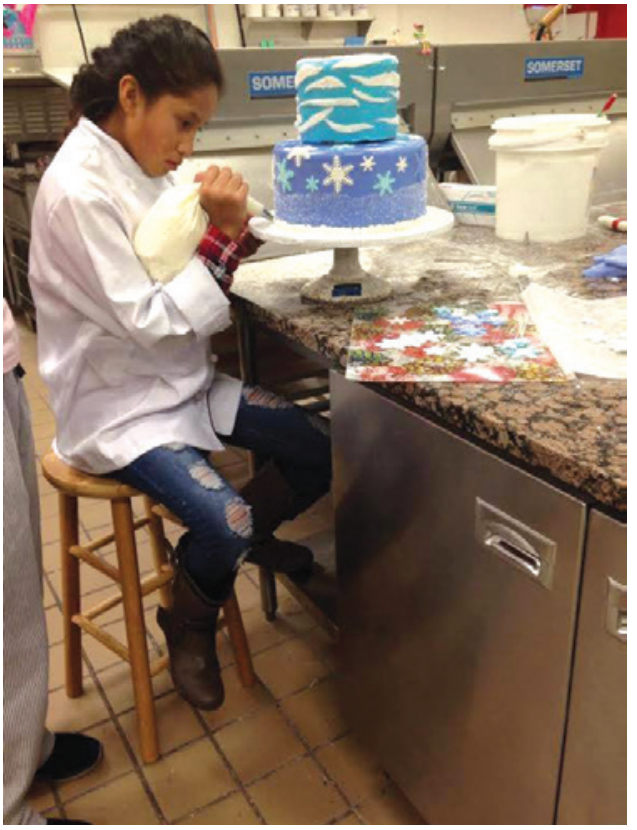
"I asked her what her dream was and explained to her what was going to happen," Queenie recounted. "She was seven or eight when she first started watching *Cake Boss,* so I knew what would happen from there."

The trip was everything that Laykeshia hoped it would be. Her mom reported that Valastro was a nice, sweet guy, and that when she met him, Laykeshia was equal parts excited and shy.

"She's the shy girl anyway, in our family!" laughed Queenie.

Laykeshia has another surgery coming up soon to install a fresh valve for her heart.

"She finds the surgeries frightening," said Queenie. "Sometimes she talks about it. She questions me and her dad. She asks so many questions, and sometimes she wants us to tell her her future. But we'll see."



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The contest runs from October 3, 2014, through December 5, 2014, and is open to members of the Cree nation living in one of the Native communities of Eeyou Istchee who are at least 18 years of age. Limit of one entry per person per day. The winner will be announced at 8:00 a.m. on December 10, 2014, during the Hydlo and Friends radio show on JBCCS.

Chisasibi fisher succumbs to hypothermia

A Chisasibi man perished in a boating accident while fishing on Wastawawmakw Lake September 24. Johnny Menarick was fishing with James Hill near kilometre 20 beach when an evening storm caught the men in rough waters. Their canoes capsized on their way back to shore.

Both men were wearing lifejackets and clung to their canoes. But Menerick eventually succumbed to hypothermia.

After reaching shore, Hill fashioned a makeshift paddle out of a tree branch, canoed back to his vehicle, and drove 16 kilometres to Chisasibi to notify officials of the accident.

A search party was quickly organized. Menerick's body was found at 7:00 am the following day.

Chisasibi Career Fair

Chisasibi Career Fair

Chisasibi hosted the 7th Annual Cree Human Resources Development Regional Career Fair Oct. 21-22 to promote job possibilities, provide one-on-one meetings between employers and potential employees and to help cut down on a sense of isolation job seekers may feel.

However, the Career Fair isn't just meant to inform job-seekers of available positions. Rather, the event, organized by Cree Human Resources Development (CHRD), helps Cree youth understand the overall job market in Eeyou Istchee and across Quebec. The Career Fair includes employers from a variety of industries, schools and training institutions.

As in previous years, the event presented a collection of opportunities, ranging from conference-table introductions to information sessions and networking breaks, where meeting new people was encouraged. There were also workshops on career planning skills, and keynote speeches.

New elementary school for Wemindji

Quebec and the federal government have made plans to build a new elementary school and much-needed housing for educators in Wemindji.

Currently the community has one school, Maquatua Eeyou School, which serves as both its elementary and secondary schools. The new elementary school will free up more space for adult education courses.

Wemindji Chief Dennis Georgekish welcomed the announcement.

"We are very pleased to share in the auspicious announcement of a new elementary school to be built in our community," said Georgekish. "The future of our children lies in the education they receive. And this new school will be able to provide new resources and support to the children of Wemindji by helping them excel in their educational endeavours."

Quebec's ministers of education and aboriginal affairs made the announcement in Wemindji with federal Minister of Aboriginal Affairs Bernard Valcourt.

"I take this opportunity to congratulate everyone who works with young people here," said Quebec Minister of Education Yves Bolduc. "Your work is admirable. Every young person who you help to stay in school until he or she receives a diploma or certification is a victory for Northern communities and for Quebec as a whole."

The new housing will be built in the region and will serve school administrators and teachers. Twenty units will be built in total: Mistissini (9), Waskaganish (5), Chisasibi (2), Waswanipi (2) and Wemindji (2).

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Gameplay Cree

Minority Media raises the stake for "empathy games"

by Alexander Reid

Back in 2012, Montreal-based game studio Minority Media sent shivers of excitement up the neck of the city's gaming industry with a provocative new gaming genre in an award-winning debut release, *Papo & Yo*. Creator Vander Caballero coined the term "empathy game" to highlight the game's relationship that it established with the player.

It wasn't light-hearted, either. The lead character was forced to deal with the challenges child faced from an abusive parent suffering from alcoholism.

One of the core requirements for categorizing a game as an "empathy game" is that it identifies and explores themes and issues that are easily felt, but problematic and uncomfortable for the parties involved to speak out about because of social stigmas. The idea to combine fantasy gameplay and storytelling techniques to illuminate a difficult social reality struck a chord in the gaming community and helped create a new industry niche.

Now Minority Media is upping its empathy quotient. In early October, Minority released *Spirits of Spring* for the iPhone and iPad, available online for $4.99. Following in *Papo & Yo's* footsteps, *Spirits of Spring* creates a reward system for the player that hinges on a heightened level of emotional investment.

Spirits of Spring invites players to step into the snowshoes of Chiwatin. He's a young Cree boy, who, along with his animal friends, Rabbit and Bear, is on a mission to rescue spring from a land of endless winter. The game-world is modeled

on the wilderness of James Bay in northern Quebec.

Chiwatin and friends use their natural and spiritual powers to dispel the snow and return life to the world. They are physically and verbally tormented by bullies in the form of crows, who do what they can to hurt or hinder them and prolong winter. Using this setting as a metaphor, *Spirits of Spring* explores the emotional constructs and processes behind bullying from the standpoints of both the victim and the bully. It also challenges the morally ambiguous role of bystanders in between the two.

gaming convention manipulates the player's emotions to mimic a real bullying situation.

Initially, the player becomes frustrated with Chiwatin's tripping, and starts to resent him. Then the crows swoop in to gang up on Chiwatin, taunting him and making fun of his clumsiness with harmful words like "stupid" and "loser." The effect is to put the player in a bully's role, which allows them to see the harm of their abuse. The player experiences unexpected guilt and stirs empathy for Chiwatin's plight.

Minority's creative directors Ernest Webb and Ruben Farrus took the time to talk about empathy, indie games and the creative forces behind the company's latest offering.

Founder Vander Caballero

An example of a subtle device that Minority employs to engage player empathy is the fact that Chiwatin's character stumbles and falls during the game through no fault of the player. This goes against the values of traditional gameplay, which accents ease and efficiency of character control as a top priority. The decision to break with

The Nation (TN): Is it fair to say that Spirits of Spring is a spiritual sequel to Papo & Yo?

Ruben Farrus (RF): We could say that *Spirits of Spring* and *Papo & Yo* have similar goals, in terms of telling a human story. Usually videogames are power-up fantasies where you just get stronger and stronger, and face stronger and stronger enemies, but that's not how life really works; highs can be very high and lows an be very low. So in terms of the story development that is what we try to demonstrate.

TN: What is it about the playing experience that sets "empathy games" apart from the hundreds of others flooding the mobile gaming market?

RF: We call them "empathy games" because they tell very human stories.

Ernest Webb (EW): It's a new genre. Instead of hiding in a game, instead of hiding yourself and escaping in a game, you have to deal with stuff. You have to deal with emotion.

RF: Usually what happens with stories in games is that managers come to you and say, "OK, we need to make this game, it has to have driving and shooting; give me a story." Then someone will come out with a story that plays like a movie and they sort of plug it together through chopping the story into parts and then putting cut-scenes here and there. What we do is the opposite. When we started, we had the story and the gameplay set at the same value. They have to work together. We did not create this game to say here's the story, now go and collect coins.

Instead, this character goes through all these phases: first he finds out that he's being bullied, then he tries to find a solution, then that solution doesn't work, what does he do when that solution that was promised to him doesn't work out? All these feelings have to be experienced through gameplay. That's the

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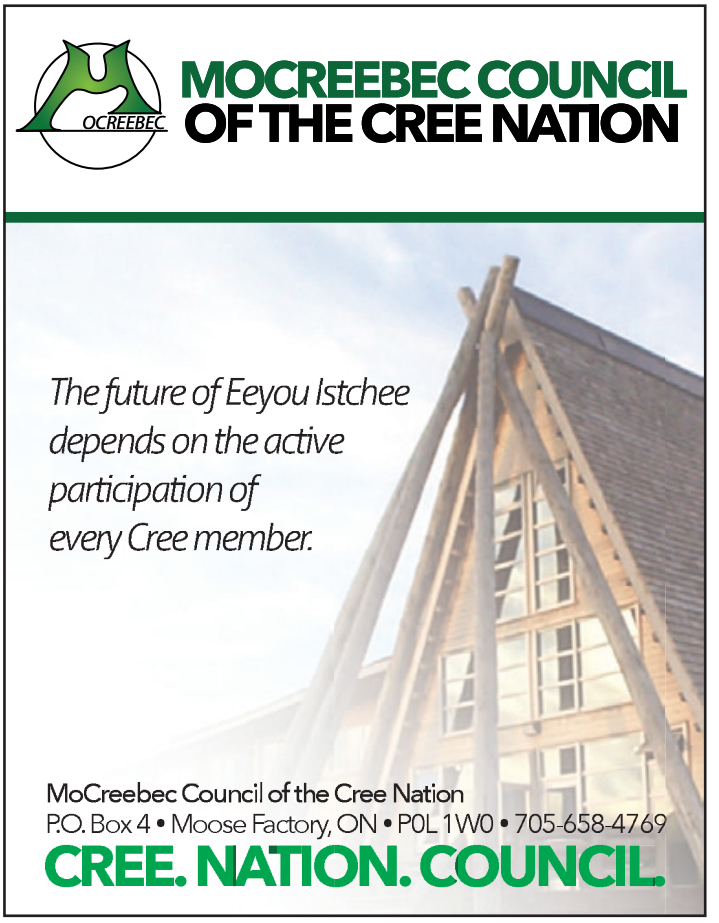
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power of videogames. Otherwise, if you don't experience it through gameplay, if you don't empathize with the main character and the other characters through gameplay, it doesn't work. What you want is to play the story, that's very important to us.

TN: What was the rationale behind the decision to develop a game for the iPhone and iPad as opposed to other gaming platforms?

RF: The story, the main theme behind the game, is about bullying and we feel its very universal and we know everyone has an iPod or an iPhone so we wanted to reach as many people as possible. We made the first game (*Papo & Yo*) as a downloadable game for the PlayStation 3 and PC, but not everyone has a PlayStation 3 hooked up to the internet where you can download downloadable games, and what we wanted to do with *Spirits of Spring* was reach as many people as possible.

Creative Director Ruben Farrus

TN: What aspects of Cree and other First Nations cultures inspired this game? And what measures did you take to ensure the game stayed true to the source culture?

RF: What we found in the Cree setting was that it was the perfect place to talk about something difficult. All the relationships between people and animals, and the relationship with weather was the perfect way to take people to a magical place and then talk about something difficult. One of the beautiful things about this game is the story. Good stories work because they take audiences to a magical place they

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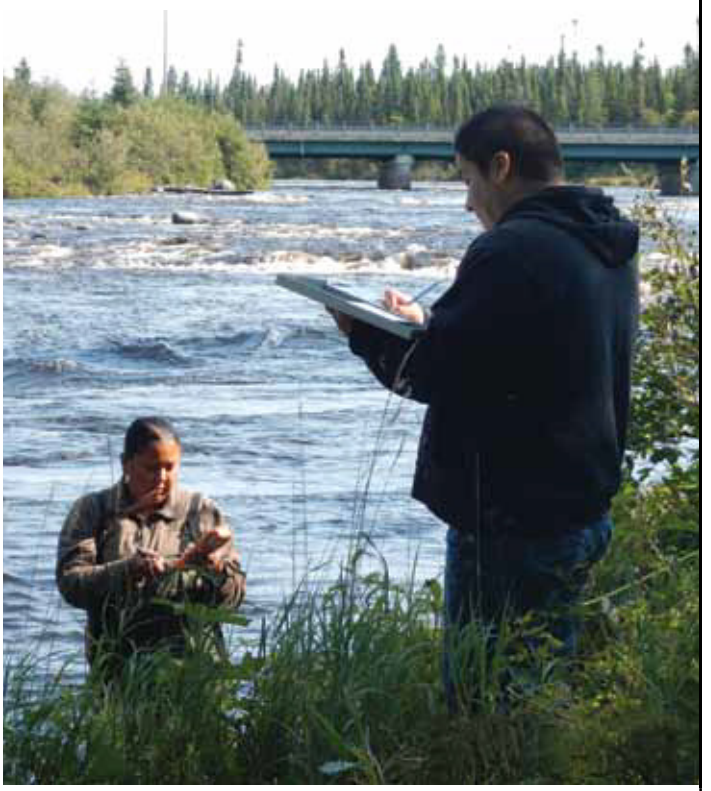

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want to explore. It's the sort of feeling that comes when people talk about what's close to their hearts. Bullying in this case, is a universal story, which touches everyone.

EW: It's loosely based on a Cree legend from James Bay, called the "Quest For Summer." There's a land where there's constant winter and this quest to go searching for summer. Ruben and I took a trip to James Bay for him to get a feel of the

land and the people. The collaboration was pretty successful, we were able to capture the landscape and make sure the story, the universe and the characters all made sense in the Cree setting and that they were faithful to the Cree culture.

RF: The overall look of the game and the art design was strongly influenced by the work of Norval Morrisseau.

EW: Chiwatin the main character himself is Cree. In the artwork we incorporated the beading on mittens and gloves and the slippers, plus Morrisseau's style of painting.

TN: Norval Morrisseau has been harshly criticized by some First Nations for revealing too much of their culture in his art. Did you run into any ethical problems with the Cree community in terms of excessive cultural appropriation?

EW: There have been no problems using the art for content so far, but it would have been difficult from a moral standpoint to do this game if none of us were Cree. The sacred ceremonies, we're not going to put them in a videogame. It was discussed, there were some discussions pertaining to that, but we are sensitive to that kind of stuff. It was a self-imposed wall; it's something that I'm sensitive to as well.

TN: Which demographic(s) is this game aimed toward?

RF: What we found out when we pitched this game to different members of the school communities in James Bay was that bullying is still a big problem in elementary and secondary schools, and bullying is still a taboo; people don't want to talk about it. So this game could work as a tool, a sort of common ground where parents, students and teachers can work together.

TN: Are there other indie games on the market, which you feel influenced by, or that you feel are breaking new ground in the "empathy game" genre?

RF: I think we have our own style and it's very unique. If you play *Papo & Yo* and *Spirits of Spring*, you can see it's unique because both gameplay and story are very fused together. Recently I played *Papers Please* and *Gone Home*; both are small downloadable indie games for the PC, and do a great job of communicating emotions through gameplay.

EW: In terms of influences, *World of Warcraft* was a big one for me. There were so many times when they came out with a new version or a new update that I thought to myself, "If only I could have been there at those artistic meetings." I saw the possibilities of bringing [First Nations'] culture into the videogame world, and we've now just scratched the surface, so there's this whole world that's opening up.

TN: How do you feel about the current status of indie games in today's gaming industry? Where do you see the most potential for growth and innovation?

RF: Innovation is coming from independent game-makers.

EW: The ones who can take a chance, who are not bound to a corporate agenda to sell millions.

RF: It's a risky endeavour. It's like a good indie movie. This is the equivalent in terms of videogames.

From Lebanon to Saskatchewan

Nadine Track exhibits her photos of the Waterhen Lake Cree

by Randy Mayer

Nadine Track was born in Lebanon at the height of a long civil war. Working as a first-aid worker, she picked up her camera to capture moments of this experience as a way to make sense of what was happening around her.

A decade ago, Track packed up and moved to Quebec. Six years later she enrolled at Collège Marsan to learn digital photography, having already eared a degree in Communication Arts from Saint Joseph University in Beirut. Three years ago, she started her career as a professional photographer shooting portraits, commercial advertising and fashion.

Track started thinking about a new project focussing on First Nations people in Canada. She had heard of a Cree community in Saskatchewan that was willing to let her shoot her photo study. Before starting her project she spent two weeks in the community to learn more about the residents, their culture and their spiritual values.

When asked why she was so interested in the Cree, Track said, "When I lived in Lebanon, we learned about the Native people of North America, and I became interested in their culture, spirituality and honest

"Track brings out who the person in her portraits. There is rawness and a spiritual feeling, when looking at each of these photos.

"Achachak" (Spirit, in Cree)

way of living. I formed a romanticized and mystical illusion about who these Native people were. But when I arrived in Canada, I found a different reality."

Asked why she photographed the Cree in Saskatchewan and not Quebec, Track confessed, "I didn't know there were Cree people in Quebec." She added that her experience as an immigrant to Canada made it easier and more comfortable to relate to the people of Waterhen Lake.

Track's latest exhibit, "Limited Edition Of Cree Tribe Portraits on Metal with Special Lighting Effects", a series of portraits of the Waterhen Lake First Nation Cree, was mounted in Montreal September 26.

This collection of seven large-format photographs (1.8 m x 1.3 m x 2 mm) are printed on Dibond Silver based professional-grade large-format aluminum sheets. This technique of printing is the same as sign printing. For a better look at the extra dimension the metal gives these photographs, check out vimeo.com/106241688

Track's photoshopped images are enhanced by multiple layers of each exposure. This technique gives each photo a textured, painting-like quality. The use of the aluminium to print the photographs gives them a

"Wounded Knee"

deeper dimension, if the right lighting is used. Is this technique practical? Maybe not, but if you had the right lights in your home, office or lobby, they come alive. The other advantage about developing photographs in this way is that the prints resist being damaged.

Taking the time to understand the person, their culture and who they are, Track brings out who the person in her portraits. There is rawness and a spiritual feeling, when looking at each of these photos. At times you can move inside the image, and lose yourself. Everything was well thought out when doing these portraits – the mood, the lighting, the costumes, the location and thee technique.

Track thanks Montreal businessman Dmitri Boudovitch for helping put the exhibit together. Her photographs will be touring several the upcoming First Nation events.

"Ogemawakan" (Chief, in Cree)

Petitioning Parliament

Romeo Saganash pressures Harper government to abide by UN Declaration

by Amy German

It's an effort to end systemic discrimination against Indigenous peoples in Canada. Romeo Saganash, NDP MP for Abitibi-Baie James-Nunavik-Eeyou, has launched a petition to force the Canadian government to implement and abide by the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

After introducing a private member's bill, C-469, Saganash is now turning to the public for support to force Canada's hand. If adopted, the bill would pave the way for change on land rights, education and power over self-determination.

While the Conservative government adopted a motion to support UNDRIP in April 2008 and then endorsed it in November 2010, it has not since respected the letter or the spirit of the declaration.

Saganash spoke with the Nation about what he is trying to do with the petition and the results it could have.

The Nation: Has Canada ever abided by the UN Declaration on Indigenous Peoples in any way, shape or form?

Romeo Saganash: Canada abides by the UNDRIP in many ways. The Declaration reflects rights already found in legislation like the Human Rights Act and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It also reflects what is known as customary international law – legal standards that have become obligatory on states through their widespread use (for example, prohibitions against genocide and slavery).

Many of the principles of UNDRIP were originally found in the New Relationship agreement between the Cree Nation and the Government of Quebec (Paix des Braves), which is already in Canadian law and practice. These agreements are based on the principles of cooperation, partnership and mutual respect. Therefore this is not foreign to Canadian law and practice.

Consider the right to self-determination – Canada has recognized the efforts of Indigenous peoples to act as autonomous diplomatic actors. This is already underway; the Grand Council of the Cree and the Inuit Circumpolar Conference have consultative status at the UN. As of 2013, 20 comprehensive self-government agreements had been signed by the federal government; notable is the Cree-Naskapi Act. The Grand Council is in continual negotiations with both the federal and provincial governments that redefine their relationship and responsibilities. Another example is the Canada-First Nations Joint Action Plan which reflects the economic and social rights that are protected under the UNDRIP. The plan addressed areas raised in article 21 of the UN Declaration.

These examples do not negate the fact that much of the Declaration remains to be implemented in Canada.

TN: Why do you think then that that they endorsed it?

RS: Indigenous peoples in Canada worked with countries for 30 years on the formulation, adoption and implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Canada was also facing tremendous pressure to sign on from organizations (both Indigenous and non). As the US, Australia and New Zealand were going to accept the Declaration, Canada would have been isolated politically.

> "CANADA CONTRADICTED ITS OWN ENDORSEMENT OF THE UN DECLARATION LAST MONTH."

TN: What does this say about (Harper's) Canada?

RS: Canada contradicted its own endorsement of the UN Declaration last month. In its endorsement in 2010, the government stated: "We are now confident that Canada can interpret the principles expressed in the Declaration in a manner that is consistent with our Constitution and legal framework."

However, at the General Assembly, in their Explanation of Vote the government omitted the above key conclusion. This constitutes bad faith. Canada has failed to uphold the honour of the Crown.

The Conservative government has also consistently failed to honour its own Apology to the Students of Residential Schools and their families and communities or the treaties signed between Nations. This government's behaviour at the UN last month is part of a pattern of its mis-

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understanding of Canada's treaty responsibilities and constant opposition to working with Indigenous peoples.

TN: How would this Bill work to change things for Aboriginal peoples?

RS: By ensuring that Canadian legislation respects the UNDRIP, the demands asserted by representatives of Indigenous peoples and their advocates for decades will begin to be respected within Canadian law. This means that all Canadian laws will be subject to review – as it currently is with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Ratifying the UNDRIP can inform public opinion, influence public policy, and guide future jurisprudence. Indigenous peoples can use it in our pursuit for the full recognition, respect, and implementation of our rights. Human-rights institutions and courts can use the Declaration as a standard to measure how Canada behaves toward our peoples, our communities, and our nations.

Canada will be obligated to cooperate with Indigenous peoples in taking measures to implement and interpret the provisions of the UN Declaration, including providing access to assistance for the fulfillment of the rights guaranteed in the Declaration.

TN: How would this be worked out in the context land and development deals that Canada has underway, for example, the Endbridge Pipeline, as clearly there have been so many Aboriginal groups that have tried to stop it but the Harperites have managed to find ways to circumvent them?

RS: The right to "Free, prior and informed consent ("FPIC") is generally understood as the right of Indigenous peoples to approve or reject proposed actions or projects that may affect them or their lands, territories or resources.

There is inherent tension between resource development and protection of traditional lands and territories in Canada. However, federal and provincial government responsibilities have constitutional obligations (section 35) to reconcile in a manner that is consistent with what the courts have described as "the honour of the Crown." Bill C-469 also makes reconciliation of the responsibilities of departmental and agency responsibilities for land resource management activities, including tenure, permitting, and approvals for resource development and protection of the rights of Aboriginal peoples an essential part of how resource management occurs in this country as defined by the Declaration.

TN: Would C-469 give any further protection to Aboriginal groups when it comes to Canada's latest FIPA deal with China?

RS: Bill C-469 would oblige the government to ensure that it respects the UNDRIP in the same way that it is obliged to respect the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Initial investigation indicates that FIPA violates the UNDRIP in several ways. FIPA violates Article 19, which provides that state measures that may affect Indigenous peoples cannot be adopted without the FPIC of Indigenous peoples. FIPA violates Article 32, which provides that Indigenous peoples have the right to determine priorities and strategies for the use of their lands or territories and other resources. FIPA violates Article 37, which obliges states like China and Canada to honour and respect Treaties.

However, I don't know what this would mean for an agreement that is already ratified.

TN: What about funding for schools; as most on-reserve and urban First Nations schools are funded approximately 22% less than their general population counterparts, would C-469 amend this?

RS: There are many articles in the UNDRIP that touch on education, particularly Article 14. UNDRIP implementation (through Bill C-469) would mean putting in place policies developed by and for Indigenous peoples with strong emphasis on traditional culture to improve education outcomes. It would mean recognizing "the right of Indigenous families and communities to retain shared responsibility for the upbringing, training, education and well-being of their children." It would work towards eliminating discrimination around education.

TN: Are there other areas of government that this new bill could affect?

RS: Essentially, Bill C-469 holds that the Government of Canada, in consultation and cooperation with Indigenous peoples, shall take all measures necessary to ensure that the laws of Canada are consistent with the UNDRIP. It would apply equally to all Canadian legislation.

To sign the petition:
petition.ndp.ca/indigenous

Cutting the wilderness foot soldiers

Quebec's austerity cutbacks could set up an environmental disaster

By Amy German

Quebec has been hemorrhaging biologists, wildlife technicians, game wardens and now endangered species recovery teams, all in the name of austerity. But what kind of an impact will this have on a region that is looking to go full steam ahead with development like the Plan Nord, particularly on its wildlife?

In recent weeks, numerous reports have surfaced warning that cadmium has been detected in the organs of 24 moose in the Abitibi-Témiscamingue region and that they should not be consumed. Moose below the 50th parallel have been severely affected by ticks, weakening some to the point of death. This prompts the question, just who was looking out for the moose and could this have any impact on Crees?

In late August, Laurent Lessard, minister of the newly formed forestry, wildlife and parks department (ministère des Forêts, de la Faune et des Parcs, or MFFP), announced that 54 positions would be eliminated, including 16 game wardens and the biologists, scientists, researchers and wilderness technicians who supported them.

Fast forward to October 7, when the MFFP announced that all of the endangered species recovery teams will have their budgets frozen until April 1, 2015, leaving virtually no one to witness the demise of these species (including woodland caribou), much less try to save them.

According to Patrick Nadeau, Quebec Executive Director of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, a non-profit group that advocates for the protection of environment and wildlife, these recent austerity cuts are without reason and reveal the true nature of the Quebec Liberal Party.

"We first expressed some serious concerns shortly after the most recent provincial elections because there was a shuffling of ministries and Premier Couillard actually invented a new ministry for forests, wildlife and parks. Previously wildlife and parks was under the department of the environment and now they have been moved to the very economically oriented MFFP," explained Nadeau.

"What we said at that time was that you are putting wildlife and parks in with a ministry that has a focus on logging and industrial economics and for us that is not a good fit."

Since then, Nadeau said, his worst fears about this government have come to fruition as these lay-

offs mean that all of those on the ground who were studying the impact of development on wildlife will no longer be able to mobilize. While the 14 recovery teams devoted to working recovering endangered species will be sitting idle, the decline of the species they had been trying to protect will continue.

Nadeau said the estimated savings of $10,000 per recovery team is minimal in terms of overall governmental spending.

"When we look at the official reasons behind these cuts, which is saving money, and then you look at the actual dollar figures, the money is so negligible that one could ask the question as to what is the real motivation behind these cuts and I don't think it is money. It is all very worrying stuff," said Nadeau.

According to Greenpeace Quebec director Nicolas Mainville, the Couillard government is making drastic cuts to any department that could hinder large industrial development, all in the name of austerity.

"Wildlife has always been the enfant pauvre within our governmental body and fauna management has always been weak, underfunded and understaffed. Now seeing these cuts within the Ministry's wildlife management shows that this is clearly an ideological decision," said Mainville.

"These sectors are not hindering the government's budget, they instead hinder industry's agenda. Seeing those cuts, the new Quebec government is sending a clear message – that the new agenda is being set by industry rather than for the common good."

According to Mainville, these teams were in charge of emergency work in the most sensitive of areas. As the biodiversity crisis worsens in the province so does the list of 500 species that are endangered, vulnerable or on the decline. In his opinion, these endangered species should be a top priority for a department that handles wildlife management.

He said the cuts were indicative of Quebec's federal counterparts and called putting the needs of industry before wildlife "Harperism".

"They are only six months into their mandate and already they have destroyed decades of work," declared Mainville. "For example, the cuts in science, biologists losing their jobs, entire project research teams shut down – these are some of drastic cuts the federal government have made that were expected, but it is surprising to see this happen at a provincial level."

When viewed in terms of the Liberals' Plan Nord 2.0, Mainville said the plan's goal is to increase industrial presence in the north, but there remains much to learn about the north in terms of traditional science. This is the area where the monitoring is most needed to examine the changes being caused by rapid climate change.

"The last thing that we need to be doing is cut down on science. Not only is it a mistake but it is also a very dangerous move for the long term when it comes to the application and credibility of the Plan Nord," stated Mainville.

In the past Quebec has benefited from a good international reputation on its environmental protection. But Mainville fears by ridding the province of its scientific backbone, Quebec may be doing away with such credibility like the rest of Canada under the Conservatives.

"Not only is there a danger for our wildlife here in Quebec, we really need to be questioning all of this at an international level and looking at whether or not Quebec has gone rogue in terms of environmental protection," said Mainville.

"The moose is a good example here because of its connection with the Cree way of life. A few things have come up with it, so what we should be doing is investigating those issues."

> "THERE WAS A TIME WHEN WE TOOK CARIBOU THAT WE HAD QUESTIONS ABOUT TO THE GAME WARDENS IN CHIBOUGAMAU AND ALL WE WERE TOLD WAS THAT IF WE DIDN'T THINK IT WAS SAFE, NOT TO EAT IT. THEY DIDN'T OFFER TO GET IT TESTED; THEY JUST SAID NOT TO EAT IT."

According to Paul Legault, President of the Syndicat des agents de protection de la faune du Québec, the union for the province's game wardens, not only will 16 positions for game wardens be cut throughout Quebec, but many game-warden offices in Eeyou Istchee will be left unmanned.

On December 1, eight specially trained game wardens will be unemployed and several others will see their workload increase, leaving a skeleton staff to cover their territory.

The Lebel-sur-Quévillon office will have two agents to cover Waswanipi, Waskaganish and

A Resource Mine

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Shawn Wapachee

Oujé-Bougoumou, Project Manager in Janitorial Services

"My responsibilities as a Project Manager for Wolf Camp Services, Cree business partner, are plural. Among other things, I am in charge of administrating the payroll, overseeing the operations, promoting health and safety, and to introduce new work methods. I enjoy the daily challenges that we face and appreciate the common opportunities that arise in a partnership context."

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Matagami. In Radisson, Kuujjuarapik, Chisasibi and Kuujjuaq there will be one person in each office. Chibougamau will be given four game wardens, who will cover Oujé-Bougoumou, Nemaska, Eastmain and Mistissini.

Legault said that in 2000 the governments had banded together to train 30 Cree and Inuit for these positions. But because most of them were only employed for about six months per year, only five remain.

"If you want to keep someone in this kind of a position you need to give them full-time employment and so they left," said Legault. "Their offices exist but there is nobody to man them. This is dangerous especially for the woodland caribou, which is an endangered species with dwindling herds."

In light of the Plan Nord, Legault said there will be thousands of new workers moving into the region to take advantage of the employment boom.

"I wrote to the ministry saying more agents will be needed. With 5000 new workers in the north, it is going to be like the 1970s all over again. When the workers are off, they will be hunting and fishing, but nobody is going to be monitoring them," said Legault.

As for the moose, the Cree Board of Health and Services of James Bay has reaffirmed their position that the animal is safe to consume, kidneys and all, despite Abitibi-Témiscamingue's warning not to eat the organs.

According to Paul Linton, Assistant Director of Public Health for Chishaayiyuu for the CBHSSJB, there is no need for panic over the consumption of traditional food as cadmium has only been detected in smokers and not in non-smokers who ate moose. Over the last decade the department has kept records on this and it shows that those who ate traditional foods did not in fact test for high levels of cadmium, which is a carcinogen.

"The study that pushed the panic button was done with 24 moose within a radius of 120 km from Rouyn-Noranda and that is a small radius. It wasn't a government study but one done by the foundries (in the area). They had done one 10 or 12 years ago that said it was high then but it only dealt with a specific area around Rouyn," said Linton.

In his opinion, there shouldn't be any concern over moose hunted within Cree territory even though there is development happening. He said the noise generated by these development sites is enough to keep the moose far away.

As for the gaps that will be left wide open by the lack of game wardens, Linton said that if anyone encounters an animal that they fear might be ill or infected with rabies, the best thing to do is contact the local Cree Trappers Association.

"They will know who to contact to have the meat tested, but there is still a lot of work to be done to set up the proper procedures," said Linton.

"There was a time when we took caribou that we had questions about to the game wardens in Chibougamau and all we were told was that if we didn't think it was safe, not to eat it. They didn't offer to get it tested; they just said not to eat it. They told us to just throw it out. And this was before the cutbacks."

Screenshots from StandAgainstUranium.com

Stand Against Uranium campaign

The Grand Chief discusses the new social media campaign

by Amy German

On October 7, the Grand Council of the Crees launched the web-based StandAgainstUranium.com campaign to inform people in Eeyou Istchee and the world about the Cree's firm stance against uranium exploration on their traditional territory.

The campaign addresses the risks associated with uranium mining and shares opinions, photos and videos to provide a forum for Crees to discuss the issue with the world at large.

Strateco Resources' Matoush uranium exploration project in the Otish Mountains was shelved when the company was unable to secure the final permit from the previous PQ government. But provincial environmental board hearings on the issue launched before last spring's election continue.

To discuss the new campaign, the Nation spoke with Grand Chief Matthew Coon Come.

The Nation: Why do you feel that it is necessary at this time to make a stand against uranium when the province of Quebec has declared a moratorium on uranium mining?

Grand Chief Coon Come: In August 2012, the Cree Nation adopted a resolution banning uranium mining in Eeyou Istchee. We reached this decision after consulting with our community members and with experts, both within our communities and from the South. We are pleased that the Government of Quebec followed our lead and declared a moratorium on uranium mining in Quebec.

But the government has said this moratorium is only temporary, until the Bureau d'audiences publiques sur l'environnement (BAPE) has issued its recommendations on the uranium industry. We know that uranium-mining companies hope that once the BAPE has completed its mandate, the issue will be up for debate again. The Cree Nation therefore cannot take any chances. We must continue to demonstrate our united stand against uranium, and make it clear to the BAPE and to the government that uranium is not wanted or needed in Eeyou Istchee.

TN: Tell us about the campaign you are doing for this involving social media?

GC: The Grand Council of the Crees has launched its #StandAgainstUranium campaign, a website and social media campaign

expressing the Crees' firm opposition to uranium development in Eeyou Istchee. Besides our website (www.StandAgainstUranium.com), you can also reach us on Facebook (James Bay Cree Against Uranium) and Twitter (@JBCAUranium). StandAgainstUranium.com is meant to inform the Crees about the risks associated with uranium mining. The campaign also provides a forum for the public to share their opinions, post photos and videos, and demonstrate their support for the Cree Nation's fight to stop uranium development in Eeyou Istchee. The more informed we are, the stronger we stand.

TN: What do you hope to convey to Crees about it?

GC: Our message is simple: The Cree Nation opposes uranium development in Eeyou Istchee because it is incompatible with our values, our culture and our way-of-life. It imposes burdens on future generations that are wholly unacceptable. The Cree Nation stood united in our opposition to the Matoush Project, which was defeated. The Quebec government heard our message and responded by mandating the BAPE to look into the industry. We must maintain our momentum. We are strongest when we stand together.

TN: How about the rest of the Quebec population, what would you like to get across there?

GC: We have said from the start that once Quebecers learned the true facts about uranium, they will join with the Cree Nation in our stand against uranium. We encourage Quebecers to visit the website, inform themselves, and stand with us.

TN: The campaign has been out for a week already, has it gained any momentum yet?

GC: The #StandAgainstUranium campaign has taken off, and the movement is growing! You just have to visit our Facebook page to see for yourselves how many people are posting photos with our #StandAgainstUranium poster. In the coming weeks, we will be launching new interactive content at StandAgainstUranium.com, and people will be able to post photos, videos and thoughts about our #StandAgainstUranium campaign. For now, you can check out the site and ask your questions about uranium.

TN: Tell us about David Suzuki's involvement?

GC: David Suzuki is a long-time ally and friend of the Crees, and he is standing with us in our opposition to uranium mining. Check out our Facebook page to see a photo of him with our #StandAgainstUranium poster!

TN: There is a promo on the Facebook site about a Cree legend that is part of this campaign, what can you tell me about this and the impact you hope it will have?

GC: The Wolverine tells the story of the ancient Cree legend of the Wolverine and the Skunk as a metaphor for the Cree Nation's

G. C. C. E. I.
40th Anniversary
1974 - 2014

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Grand Council of the Crees (Eeyou Istchee)
Grand Conseil des Cris (Eeyou Istchee)

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G. N. C.
est. 1978

39th Anniversary of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement

1975-2014

This year marks the 39th anniversary of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement. It is important to honour the young Cree leaders that were asked by community elders to lead the fight during the negotiations of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement. Let's extend our appreciation and respect to the dedicated and courageous Eeyou leaders who against tremendous odds fought for our rights in the 1970's and let's honour the Eeyou signatories of the JBNQA:

Chief Billy Diamond
Chief Robert Kanatewat
Chief Fred Blackned
Chief Matthew Shanush
Chief Peter Gull
Philip Awashish
Smally Petawabano
Chief Joseph Petagamaskum
Chief Bertie Wapachee
Abel Kitchen

On April 1, 1971, without consultation with the Eeyou of Eeyou Istchee, and without our consent, Premier Robert Bourassa announced the James Bay Hydroelectric Development Project describing it as "the project of the Century". Eeyou/Eenouch immediately opposed the project and initiated court proceedings to stop the intrusion into Eeyou territory. Since then, the unfolding of events that followed the announcement of hydroelectric development within Eeyou Istchee has dramatically changed the course and direction of Eeyou/Eenou history.

The decision of Judge Malouf of the Quebec Superior Court in November 1973 resulted in an order to immediately stop the construction of the James Bay Hydroelectric Development Project within the Cree territory. Although the Quebec Court of Appeal overturned this judgment, Quebec and Hydro Quebec were obliged to negotiate with our people. The result of these negotiations was the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement signed on November 15, 1974—our Treaty and the basis for future successes.

The signature of the JBNQA marked the beginning of our long journey towards the recognition of our rights, the dramatic improvement of the living conditions in our communities, the recognition of the requirement for Cree consent for any development in our traditional territory, the advancement of our system of governance and the continuation of our Cree way of life based on our special relationship with our traditional territory—Eeyou Istchee.

fight against uranium development in Eeyou Istchee. The film was directed by the incredible Cree director Ernest Webb of Rezolution Pictures, and was sponsored by the Grand Council of the Crees. The Wolverine premiered at the International Uranium Film Festival in Berlin early October, and will be screened in North America in April 2015, when the Cree Nation hosts the IUFF in Quebec City, Montreal and Mistissini. The film, which showcases the beauty of our pristine land, is about our connection to Eeyou Istchee, the importance of our culture, and the strength of our community. It conveys the essence of our people's resolve to stand together to protect our lands and our way-of-life.

TN: Earlier this year the Matoush project was shut down and cleared out, so who do the Cree want to stop from mining or exploring for uranium?

GC: The Matoush site has been closed down, but Strateco is currently in court trying to overturn the Minister of the Environment's decision to refuse its project. We have intervened in this case, in order to represent our people's rights and interests. But our opposition to uranium mining is not just about Strateco's Matoush Project. Many less advanced uranium projects have occurred on our territory over the past five years. We want uranium to stay in the ground, undisturbed, where it belongs.

TN: Is there anything else you would like to add?

GC: The BAPE will be visiting Eeyou Istchee one last time during the week of November 10, and I would encourage everyone to come out to one of their hearings in Chisasibi, Chibougamau or Mistissini. This is our last chance make our position clear to the BAPE. Let's stand together against uranium development.

Mistissini youth say No Uranium

Matthew Coon Come at BAPE hearing

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Dialysis unit opens in Mistissini

Decades in the making, a new dialysis unit in Mistissini will finally allow the community's diabetes patients to receive care at home. The clinic, which opened October 8, offers hemodialysis for patients who had previously been treated in Chibougamau or Montreal.

Dialysis is a process to clean the blood for advanced diabetics suffering kidney failure and need the treatment to keep them alive.

During dialysis a patient is intravenously connected to a device that draws out their blood to filter it because their natural kidney filtration no longer functions. Most who undergo dialysis treatment need the process three times per week over an average of four hours.

Lisa Petagumskum, the Assistant Executive Director of Miyupimaatisiiun, Mistissini's health centre, says the medical advance is a huge step for the community.

"We really take pride in being able to provide this service on the territory," said Petagumskum. "There are a lot of people who have put in their time and have sacrificed a lot of family time to be able to get this off the ground."

According to the Cree Health Board, almost a quarter of the population of Eeyou Istchee over 20 years of age had been diagnosed with Type 2 Diabetes by 2011.

For Mistissini, which has a population of 3,569, this means approximately 600 people suffer from Type 2 diabetes and another 150 residents are in a state of pre-diabetes, meaning they have high blood sugar and are at risk for developing diabetes.

The Quebec government provided funding for the clinic under a health agreement signed in the early 2000s. The unit was opened with four patients in a ceremony attended by the community's Chief and Deputy Chief. The four-nurse team operates the clinic five days a week.

Once the clinic is in full operation it will be able to treat about 12 patients per day. At the moment 18 patients from Mistissini require dialysis three times per week. Of those, 15 have been receiving dialysis in Chibougamau while three needed to travel to Montreal because Chibougamau has been at capacity.

The Mistissini clinic functions with satellite supervision from a nephrologist in Montreal who verifies each patient's treatment. A goal is to open up another satellite in Waskaganish so that patients there will also receive treatment in their home community.

Lisa Petagumskum, the Assistant Executive Director of Miyupimaatisiiun, Mistissini's health centre

According to Petagumskum, the inspiration for the clinic came from the community's youth after a letter had been published in the Nation by Daisy Matabie back in 1997 about the needs for dialysis treatment on the territory and the impact being away from home had on the patients and their families.

The Cree Nation Youth Council then began organizing the Journey through the Heart of Eeyou Istchee: Bringing Our People Home, a traditional walk that raised over $600,000 for dialysis machines in Chibougamau.

According to Ashley Iserhoff, the then-CNYC Deputy Grand Chief who participated in the walk with James Gunner, John F. Matoush and Andrew Neeposh, the new clinic is a dream that finally came true.

"It's a good thing to have this dialysis clinic open and it is exciting because a lot of the families have been apart but now have been brought together. They don't need to travel an extensive amount of time anymore or be apart," said Iserhoff.

"It was really hard on the family members of those who were on dialysis at that time because they were away from home and would be gone for sometimes six months or a year and then only be able to come home for a few days. This is what got us moving and it moved us to do what we did back in 1999."

A rising star

Cree singer Mariame Hasni is in the final stages of recording her debut album

by Joel Barde

Mariame Hasni has been singing for as long as she can remember. And it shows: she has an outstanding, powerful voice, one that has been mesmerizing Cree and non-Cree audiences for years.

But that voice may have remained hidden, as Hasni once tried to hide her talent.

"I got discovered in the bathroom," she explains over the phone, having just tucked in her two young children.

It was something she did often – take a bathroom break in order to sing. Except this time, she took a little too long.

"My teacher came to check up on me and caught me," Hasni recounted. "And after that, she really pushed me to perform. That's how it all started, just from a teacher who really believed in me."

Hasni is currently recording her debut album, produced with the support of the Cree Native Arts and Crafts Association. CNACA awarded her its "rising star award" last year.

CNACA project and event organizer Darryl Hester designed last year's event, and is still enthused by the Hasni's performance (which can be seen on YouTube).

"She has a unique voice," says Hester, himself an accomplished musician. "She reminds me of Rihanna a little bit – but a Cree Rihanna."

Hester and CNACA have been working with Hasni since awarding her the prize.

"We want to assist her in going further with her career, to give her a hand in achieving her goals. So we're supporting her financially through producing her own six-song EP," he said.

Hasni is indeed a fan of Rihanna. But she draws on a number of other influences, including Celine Dion. Her stepmother used to play Dion around the house, and Dion's impressive vocal range and emotion spoke to Hasni at a young age.

Another influence is the Mexican-American singer Selena Gomez. Hasni says she loves the sincerity and warmth of her music, how Selena was "goofy" and "humble".

She also says Selena's music resonates with her on a personal level because Selena struggled with issues of identity as an American pop star who was perceived by many white Americans as Mexican – despite not being able to speak Spanish.

Mariame Hasni

Hasni speaks and understand Cree, however, even though she grew up in a mixed family with an Algerian father and a Cree mother in Montreal.

Like Selena, Hasni always felt like a bit of an outsider: "I always felt different. I always felt like an outcast growing up, no matter where I went."

Hasni's music allows her to connect with a wide range of people. She has performed in Chisasibi since the age of 15, nearly every summer and Christmas break, when she travels there to spend time with family.

She reckons she's visited and sang in nearly every Cree community. It's something she loves to do.

There is, of course, a lot to love: the adoration of fans, the ability to connect with people and their spirits.

Connecting with young audience members is the high point of her performances.

"I remember being that kid in the crowd, watching singers perform, and saying one day I'm going to do that. Performing makes me remember where I came from, where I've been," she says.

In the final stages of recording her album, Hasni is only willing to talk in broad strokes about the project. There are love songs, break-up songs, and songs that intimately reflect deeply felt personal experience. That's all she will share: "I would rather keep it a secret right now."

For a taste of her work and potential, you can see her 2013 CNACA performance:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Mpwms7ViQE

Darryl Hester, Mariame Hasni, David Hodges (producer)

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Lest We Forget

by Xavier Kataquapit

Lest we forget – that is the phrase that reminds us of the horrors of war and those who gave their lives in conflicts around the world. We all know that November 11 is set aside to take time to remember those who have perished in war on our behalf.

A few days ago my friends in the Bradley family from Six Nations near Hamilton, Ontario, participated in an early remembrance ceremony, held by the Six Nations Veterans Association in Ohsweken, for the local First Nation people who lost their lives in war. The Bradley patriarch, John Bradley Sr., who passed away this year, was a decorated veteran of the Second World War. He never failed to attend Remembrance Day ceremonies. His wife Norma and daughters Laurie and Luanne laid wreaths in his memory and for those who have fallen in war. His son John Jr. read the honour roll call and act of remembrance.

Chief Ava Hill was on hand to voice her words of support, healing and remembrance to all those in attendance. Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation Council Chief Bryan LaForme, Member of Provincial Parliament Dave Levac, Brant County Mayor Ron Eddy and other dignitaries also paid homage to the day. There was a parade, pipe band and military ceremonials. Four Delhi Harvard aircraft lifted the hearts of everyone in a nostalgic fly past.

In a Bradley family gathering later at Laurie and Fred Lambert's home in Brantford everyone gathered to note the day and to bid bon voyage to several family members heading out on a world tour. I could not help notice what a huge gap there was amongst us since John Sr. was not on hand, lifting spirits and comforting his family with humour and kindness. It was just not the same.

However, as life in its ebbs and flows takes and gives, we had a bright ray of sunshine on this day. A new baby in the family, Everett Martin, one-year-old son of Chris and Tess was there in all his smiling glory with his scramble from adult to adult for hugs, kisses and laughter. He did his late great-grandpa John Sr. proud with his healing gift in his own way to remind us of the hope that new life provides.

As I watched little Everett roll around on the back lawn covered in red, yellow and orange leaves I thought of how fortunate he was to be born in this time and place with family all around. As he lay on his back staring up at the pale blue sky framed by the faces of loved ones in play and the colour of fall in the trees over head I wondered at what kind of future we would provide him in our world.

In remembrance, I thought of my great-grandfather John Chokomolin, who participated in the First World War. He left his family on the shores of Attawapiskat only to die in England of the Spanish flu. I thought of all those other young men of Attawapiskat, all the other First Nations and all the non-Native men and women who had gone to war. Many did not return. I thought of all those civilian casualties, children, mothers, fathers, grandmothers and grandfathers who perished in wars gone by.

It dawned on me that our Remembrance Day should be very far reaching. It should also be dedicated to reminding us that we want a better world for little Everett and all the little boys and girls of future generations that deserve a life well lived, long and prosperous. The rich and powerful rarely if ever send their boys and girls off to war, but in fact they are responsible for much of the conflict that results in war, which almost always results from a confrontation over land, resources and riches.

I am hopeful that we as civilized people have come to the point in our development that we can find new ways to work together in a world community where wars are considered a barbaric thing of the past. That means that we really have to dig deep and be realistic and honest in our Remembrance Day ceremonies. Most of us are not buying the mantra of war anymore. We need to stand up and be counted as those with hope for a new world with better ways to solve conflicts for Everett's sake. Just as those who returned from war-torn Europe a century ago vowed.

Lest We Forget.

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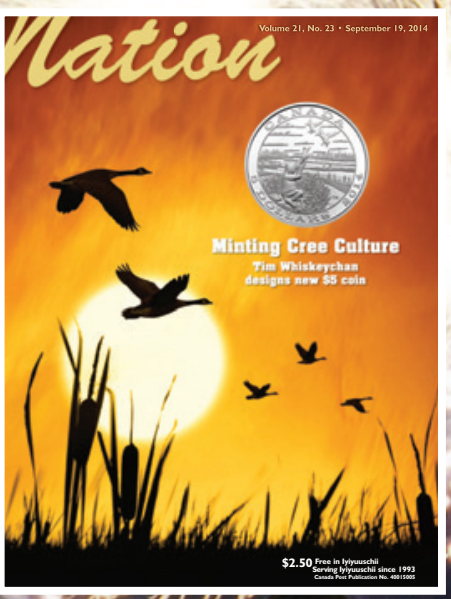

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